

Aug 8th 2010: Armour of God series:#2 Frozen or Chosen? Isa 11:1-9

I have, somewhere in my study a book with the revealing title-"God's Frozen People." As far as I can recall it's major premise was that too often many believers fail to act as God's chosen people in this world. Instead they keep their faith hidden and are as active for Jesus as frozen vegetables in a freezer. In other words they wander through this world without creating even a ripple for Jesus. They don't bother to put on the Armour of God because they have no intention of making a stand for Him in their lives, homes, or communities. They see themselves as Christians and believe themselves to be part of the chosen, but to others and to God they appear more frozen than chosen.

The challenge I would like us to think about today is whether we tend towards the Frozen rather than the Chosen. Whether you tend toward the Frozen or the Chosen. For you see the Chosen side of the equation focuses on the responsibility which belongs to every Christian, to stand for Jesus against the attacks of the evil one. That's why God has made this Armour available to us. So that as the Chosen in Christ Jesus we will stand, and having done all stand.

A consideration of the passage about the Armour which is found in Ephesians 6:10-12 quickly reveals that 'Standing' is the key objective that God has for His chosen people. 4 times in verses 11-14 the word 'stand' appears in one form or another.

*6:11 ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your **stand** against the devil's schemes.*

*6:13 ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, to **stand**.*

*6:14 ¹⁴**Stand** firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,*

The initial issue for us, though, is what this "standing" means for you, for me, as Christians living in the world today? Think about that for a moment. What does it mean for you to stand rather than to be asleep on the job? What thoughts come into your mind?

Earlier this week I thought about that question and I began by wondering what 'to stand' actually means. I have seen a rabbit stand at night in the middle of the road, fixed there by the glare of the headlights, absolutely frozen in place. That's obviously not what standing means for the believer.

Then just recently I have seen the Queen's soldiers on duty outside Buckingham Palace and other places. Completely still with only their eyes moving, yet, as they stood in their little sentry boxes you knew that they were on duty. Ever ready to spring into attack if needed. And in the same place I had quite a chat with an English policeman who was on crowd control duty. He had to stand too. And for most of the time he just stood there watching the crowd. But it was evident he was doing a job. And at the times he had to direct people away from a certain spot or from going in the wrong direction, you knew for sure then that standing for him was more than just being there. He was doing what he had committed himself to doing when he took on that uniform. And surely in these two men we see an illustration of what "standing" means for the believer. It's doing what we committed ourselves to doing, when we chose to unite ourselves with Jesus as His followers.

Fulfilling such a commitment however, is never going to be an easy task. The fact that God gives us access to heavenly armour so that we can do so is proof of that. But it is also a very necessary thing that believers should stand, and that's why Paul mentions the word 'stand' so often in verses 11-14. And each time he uses the word he gives it a slightly different emphasis.

#1. Look with me at verse 11:-

*6:11 "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your **stand** against the devil's schemes.*

What we need to notice here is what the verse doesn't say. It doesn't say, so that you can take your stand if you want to, or choose to, or feel like it. Paul is emphasizing here that this standing is for every believer. You have a stand to take for Jesus and if you are not standing for Him in the place where He has put you, then you are being disobedient to your calling.

It is not enough to say that my workmates, neighbours, friends, family, KNOW that I am a Christian, they also need to SEE that I am a Christian because they see me Taking a Stand for Him. What that involves will be

different for each of us and constantly changing. It may be having a Jesus All About Life poster up on your front lawn. The Christian slant you put on conversations with your neighbor about current events. The fact that they see you drive out each Sunday and they know you are off to church. The offer to pray for them or the word you say in due season.

One of the places we visited in Harlaam in the Netherlands was the home of Corrie ten Boom. Her family were solid Christians who hid in their house over their shop, hundreds of people, especially Jews, who were being hunted down by the Germans during the war. We saw the hole behind the wall in Corrie's bedroom where 6 people were hiding when the Germans came looking as the result of a tip off. Yet these 6 were never discovered despite a three day search by the Germans who knew these fugitives were somewhere in that house. What touched me most was that the ten Boom family were not young people when they did this. The father was 84 and both Corrie and her sister were single ladies in their mid forties. And that they did it because they believed as Christians they had to make such a stand for Jesus against such injustice. So every morning they gathered around their breakfast table and read together the whole of Psalm 91, which begins:

¹ *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

² *I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

³ *Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.*

⁴ *He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

That's what making a stand meant for them. Making a stand for you and me will be a lot different, but just as much part of the commitment we made to follow Jesus. It could be saying no when the pressure is to say Yes. The teaching here is that Making a stand for Jesus if you belong to Him is not a choice, it is part and parcel of who you are.

#2. Now move on with me to the first part of v13:-

6:13 ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand** your ground

Paul's emphasis here is quite different. He moves on to what we can expect when we set out to make a stand. This is the picture that was painted for us in our reading from Isaiah 11 of Jesus, as the coming Messiah, in the battle against evil. He is pictured as a warrior clothed in God's armour, triumphant in battle against the powers of darkness.

So Paul is stressing in Ephesians 6:13 how much a Christians needs to put on the armour of God, because when he or she makes a stand as a believer, they are immediately under attack from evil.

As a Christian your stand may be against something internal in you. The decision to avoid doing something because you know it's dishonouring Jesus. You know it's wrong. It's destroying your life or your witness. You sense God putting His finger on it again and again, but you have become expert at rationalizing it away. You need to make a stand against it but you know that the moment you do the evil one will attack you. To be able to stand you must take on the armour of God.

Or maybe for you it is an external thing. A decision to be baptized. To start a bible study or prayer group at work. To speak out against an injustice you see or to uphold some Christian value that is being eroded. You know you need to do it but you are hesitating because it will mean opposition. You know that even some Christians may oppose you or tell you to let the issue lie. Paul tells you to expect the battle but to go ahead anyhow, because the Armour of God is provided for such a battle and will enable you to stand. It's informative to note that the form of this word stand is different to the other words. It's a compound word that means to resist or to withstand against opposition.

When we were in Helsinki we saw that beautiful white Lutheran Cathedral there. Inside that enormous church there is an absence of religious statues or icons but there is there two very large white statues. One to Luther and the other to his co worker Melanchthon. The reminder is clear. These men made a stand for what they believed in and because of that the reformation began. But in making that stand Luther had to stand up against severe opposition from the Pope and the Roman Catholic church that nearly cost him his life on several occasions. And there is a famous speech he made on the day that he was tried before a major council of the church as a heretic. And this is just a part of it as recorded in the book "Martin Luther" by Mike Feardon page 128(Bethany House Publishers):-

"Unless I am shown by the testimony of Scripture and by evidential reasoning—for I do not put faith in the pope or councils alone, because it is established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience."

As he finished, the background murmur rose. Everyone seemed to be talking at once. Martin turned away and murmured, "Here I stand. God help me. Amen."

Whatever that stand is that the Lord is calling you to make, you probably think at times that it's impossible. What Paul proclaims here is that the Armour of God is what makes the impossible, possible.

And so we come to the latter part of v13 and to the "stand" that ends v13 and begins v14.

#3 *"and after you have done everything, to **stand.**"*

It is so important that we realize that what Paul is emphasizing here, is that our 'standing for Jesus' must never be static. We stand, and do everything that is involved in our standing, and then we continue to stand. So our standing is a forward push. It's advancing one step at a time. It's making progress, however small that progress may seem.

There is an inspiring story in 1 Samuel 14 about Jonathan the son of king Saul. At that time the Philistines had come out to battle the Israelites and they were so mighty that most of Saul's army had deserted him. He was left we are told with just 600 men. Jonathan and his armour bearer decided that they were prepared to make a stand against the enemy and would only move as the Lord commanded them. So together they went and stood in a narrow ravine clearly in sight of the enemy. You see Jonathan had said in 1 Samuel 14:6

"Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

He took on the armour that was his trust in God to work through a few or many, and he decided to make his stand. However he did not rush in without God's direction. The story goes on to say that Jonathan asked God for a sign before he acted. That if the Philistines called him to come forward and fight,

then he would know that the time to move forward in his stand had come. So the Philistines did call him, and together he and his armour bearer were used by God to gain a great and impossible victory.

He did all that God desired of him, and at the end he still stood. That's God's promise for us whatever the stand is He calls us to make, as long as we do so in His strength not our own, and clothed in His armour.

Of course the battle may not be as ferocious as Jonathan's or the results so obvious. Our stand may be more like the farmer who sows the seed, then waits and tends it when needed, confident that if he does so the Lord will one day bring a harvest. Such a stand still rests upon the hope that we have in Christ.

The major truth out of all this is that we stand for Jesus clothed in the Armour of God. That as individuals and a church we set out each and every day, to be seen by others, not as God's frozen people, but as God's chosen people who reveal that they belong to Him by the way we stand, and having done all still stand.